

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently Amended) A deck system comprising:

~~a plurality of laterally spaced joists;~~

a plurality of boards ~~operable to extend across a plurality of laterally spaced joists extending across and supported by the joists~~, each of said boards presenting an upper lip and a lower lip, said upper and lower lips defining a pair of longitudinally extending grooves on generally opposite sides of the board, and said lower lip having a thickness "E"; and

a plurality of fasteners ~~each operable to rigidly couple~~[[d]] to the joists, each of said fasteners presenting a base and a pair of protrusions having a height "F," each of said protrusions further operable to be being received in a respective groove of a respective board in a substantially complementary fashion, wherein "F is the average vertical distance from the base to the protrusions and" "E" is at least 1% greater than "F."

29. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, wherein "E" is at least about 2% greater than "F."

30. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 29, wherein "E" is at least about 5% greater than "F."

31. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 28, wherein the protrusions exert a downward holding force on the lower lips when the protrusions are at least partially received within the grooves.

32. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 31, wherein the downward holding force is due to the thickness of the lower lips being at least 1% greater than the height of the protrusions.

33. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 31, wherein the downward holding force inhibits upward movement of the boards relative to the fasteners and joists.

34. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 31, wherein the fasteners are comprised of a resilient material that allows the protrusions to be elastically flexed when the protrusions are at least partially received within the grooves.

35. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 34, wherein the flexing of the protrusions facilitates maintaining the downward holding force on the lower lips.

36. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 28, wherein the fasteners securely couple the boards to the joists when the protrusions are at least partially received within the grooves.

37. (Currently Amended) A deck system comprising:

~~a plurality of laterally spaced joists;~~

a first board operable to extend[[ing]] across and be supported by ~~[[the]]~~ a plurality of joists,
the first board presenting a pair of similarly configured opposite sides, each of the
sides including upper and lower ~~a pair of spaced-apart~~ longitudinally extending lips
presenting opposing inwardly facing surfaces; and

a fastener operable to be rigidly coupled to at least one of the joists, the fastener presenting
a base and at least one protrusion, the protrusion being operable to contact both of the
inwardly facing surfaces on one of the sides of the first board to continually exert a
first downward holding force on the lower lip ~~one of the lips~~ to force the first board
towards the joist; wherein the thickness of the lower lip is at least 1% greater than the
average vertical distance from the base to the protrusion.

38. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the first holding force more
securely couples the first board to the joist than if no first holding force is applied.

39. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the protrusion is formed
of a resilient material such that the protrusion flexes to facilitate exertion of the first holding force.

40. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the first holding force
inhibits upward movement of the first board relative to the fastener and joists.

41. (Canceled)

42. (Currently Amended) The deck system of claim 37 ~~[[41]]~~, wherein the thickness of the lower lip upon which the first holding force is exerted is at least 2% greater than the average vertical distance from the base to the protrusion height of the protrusion relative to the joist when the protrusion is not flexed.

43. (Currently Amended) The deck system of claim 42, wherein the thickness of the lower lip upon which the first holding force is exerted is at least 5% greater than the average vertical distance from the base to the protrusion height of the protrusion relative to the joist when the protrusion is not flexed.

44. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the first holding force securely couples the first board to the joists.

45. (Previously Presented) The deck system of claim 37, wherein the deck system includes a second board, the second board being substantially similar to the first board, wherein the fastener exerts a second downward holding force on the second board such that the first holding force and the second holding force inhibit movement of the first board and second board relative to the joists thereby forming a more rigid deck system than if the holding forces were not present.

46. (Currently Amended) A method of coupling a plurality of boards to a plurality of support members, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) rigidly attaching a first fastener to a first support member, the first fastener having a base and at least one protrusion;
- (b) positioning a first board across the first support member and against the rigidly-attached first fastener such that the protrusion of the first fastener is at least partially received in a first longitudinal groove of the first board to form a mating relationship between the first board and the first fastener, wherein the positioning of the first board and the first fastener in the mating relationship causes the protrusion of the first fastener to flex and exert a first downward holding force on the first board, wherein-
the longitudinal groove is generally defined by an upper lip and a lower lip,
the first holding force is exerted against the lower lip, and
the thickness of the lower lip is at least 1% greater than the average vertical
distance from the base to the protrusion;
- (c) positioning a second fastener against the first board such that a protrusion of the second fastener is at least partially received in a second longitudinal groove of the first board to form a mating relationship between the first board and the second fastener; and
- (d) rigidly attaching the second fastener to the first support member while maintaining the mating relationship between the first board and the first and second fasteners.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein the first holding force inhibits movement of the first board relative to the first fastener and the first support member.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein the first holding force holds the first board against the first support member.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein rigidly attaching the second fastener to the first support member causes the protrusion of the second fastener to flex and exert a second downward holding force on the first board.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the first and second holding forces are exerted on generally opposite sides of the first board.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the first and second holding forces hold the first board against the first support member.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the first and second holding forces securely couple the first board to the first support member.

53. (Canceled)

54. (Canceled)

55. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 46 ~~[[54]]~~, wherein the thickness of the lower lip is at least 2% greater than the average vertical distance from the base to the protrusion ~~the height of the protrusions relative to the support members when the protrusions are not flexed.~~

56. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 55, wherein the thickness of the lower lip is at least 5% greater than the average vertical distance from the base to the protrusion ~~the height of the protrusions relative to the support members when the protrusions are not flexed.~~

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46; and

(e) positioning a second board across the first support member and against the second fastener to thereby form a mating relationship between the second board and the second fastener.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the second fastener is disposed generally between the first and second boards.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein the second fastener causes a gap to be maintained between the first and second boards.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the holding force inhibits movement of the boards relative to one another, movement of the support members relative to one another, and movement of the boards relative to the support members, thereby forming a more rigid deck system than if the holding force were not present.

61. (New) A method of coupling a plurality of boards to a plurality of support members, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) rigidly attaching a first board to a first support member, the first board having a longitudinal groove generally defined by an upper lip and a lower lip;
- (b) positioning a first fastener against the rigidly attached first board to form a mating relationship between the first board and the first fastener, the first fastener having a base and a first and a second protrusion, the thickness of the lower lip being at least 1% greater than the average vertical distance from the base to the first protrusion, the first fastener positioned such that the first protrusion is at least partially received in the longitudinal groove;
- (c) rigidly attaching the first fastener to the first support member while maintaining the mating relationship between the first board and the first fastener; and
- (d) positioning a second board having a second longitudinal groove against the first fastener such that the second protrusion is at least partially received in the second longitudinal groove to form a mating relationship between the second board and the first fastener.